

# LIVING STONES OF ARCHITECTURE

BY

GRAHAM CAREY



*I am the Way*

SUPPLEMENT TO THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY  
CHRISTMAS, 1955, Vol. XIX, No. 1

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DEDICATION

*Books in the brooks, sermons in stones,  
God everywhere, on land and sea;  
House cats wear crowns, mice rule from thrones  
H. W. doth bear the key.*





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# LIVING STONES

*The condition of architecture in our Western culture and the problem of restoring it to a state more nearly worthy of its noble office has been of concern to Mr. Carey for many years. Here he discusses the origin and development of architecture, giving special consideration to its adoption and use by the Christian Church, as well as to its gradual loss of integrity in recent times. He suggests that the solution to the problem of this degeneracy is to be found in a renewed respect for the rhetorical function of the seven architectural archetypes.*



## TIME WAS

IN its origins and in its very nature, architecture has been an essentially religious activity. The difficulties that we experience with architecture today are due to our failure to regard it as a religious activity, and these difficulties can only be met by a whole-hearted return to a religious attitude toward everything around us. I will be using the word "religion" in the broad sense of an attitude of love and respect not only for God above us, but also for our fellow man, and indeed for all the other creatures that God has so wonderfully made. I am not using the word "religion" here to mean any particular formulation of theological truth or a mere state of pious intention.

The attitude of respect for the unseen Presence of God seems to be one of the earliest of human experiences. This awareness of a mysterious Power, intangible but none-the-less real, behind the changing and apparently self-sufficient phenomena of Nature is certainly one of the most basic elements in religious experience. Primitive men today are, and we may safely assume that our remotest ancestors were, keenly aware of this awe-inspiring Presence standing invisible behind the visible world. The experience of this Presence is usually called the *numinous* experience.

Mr. C. S. Lewis has discussed this type of awe among ancient peoples.<sup>1</sup> "We do

not know — says Mr. Lewis — how far back in human history this feeling goes. The earliest men almost certainly believed in things which would excite the feeling in us if *we* believed in them, and it seems, therefore, probable that numinous awe is as old as humanity itself." "In Pagan literature we find Ovid's picture of the dark grove on the Aventine of which you say at a glance *numen inest* — the place is haunted, or there is a Presence here; and Virgil gives us the palace of Latinus, 'awful (*horrendum*) with woods and sanctity (*religione*) of elder days.' A Greek fragment attributed to Aeschylus, tells us of earth, sea, and mountain shaking beneath the 'dread eye of their Master.' Further back Ezekiel tells us of the 'rings' of his Theophany that 'they were so high they were dreadful,' and Jacob, rising from sleep, says 'How dreadful is this place!'"

What anthropological evidence we have indicates that from the earliest ages certain specific localities have been associated with the numinous. Places where holy men had experienced visions, places of prophecy, of sacrifice, of miracle, or reputed miracle would gather such associations. For the primitive tillers of the soil the source of the river whose valley was their whole world would be such an awesome spot. And so might the top of some high mountain — intrinsically awe-inspiring even in the absence of any original numinous as-

<sup>1</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948) pp. 6-7.



sociation. Or, for one last example, before men had learned to make fire, but were dependent on its use for what few comforts they enjoyed, the place where a dead tree had been lightning-struck, the place of God's great gift of fire to his children, and of his manifestation both of power and of solicitude for them, would become naturally such a holy place.

It would be only natural to mark such places with imperishable signs, so that they could be easily found in forest or desert, and memory of great things be kept alive. And so the river source, the holy man's cave, the mountain top, and the rest might be marked. And as the root of the fire-tree rotted away and disappeared, it would be natural to preserve the memory of the miraculous gift by surrounding the spot with a ring of rough stones, lest future men should forget to be grateful. Thus Joshua, marching to the destruction of Jericho set up a cairn of twelve stones — "the stones of remembrance" — to celebrate a great and saving miracle. Thus, wherever the awesome Power which though hidden from their eyes had made itself in some special way manifest, it was natural for those ancient ancestors of ours to mark the place as sacred.

We may well suppose that the stretch of time which saw the development in the chipping of flints from rough hand axes, and knives scarcely distinguishable from natural stones, to such technical marvels as the "laurel leaf" points and knives of the later paleolithic, saw also a great improvement in the art of stone building. It is difficult to believe that the much easier craft of laying up dry walls was not improved and formalized. Rough rings of chance pebbles and boulders must have changed into more formal shapes and

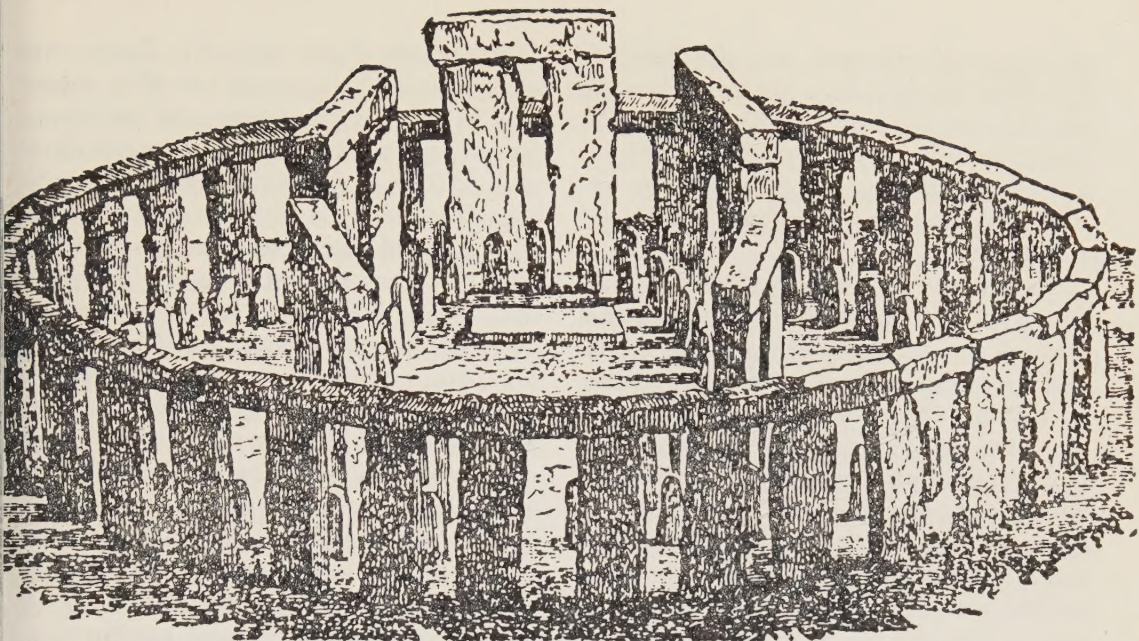
shown a clearer craftsmanship. And we know that in the end the specifically human tendency to formalize and geometrize expressed itself in two quite different figures, the circle and the square. For walls the circle was the choice of one type of culture, that of "the higher hunters," while the rectangle was the choice of the early tillers of the soil. These two types of culture developed for countless millennia in independence of one another, and developed also different types of religion and views of life.

We know that for men of the hunting cultures the world is conceived of as circular. "If you do not believe this" — said an old Indian of our own times — "climb to the top of a high hill and see for yourself. Remember also that when Manitou made the world, he built it as the eagle builds his nest with his claws — circular." That natural artistic piety which is so foreign to our secular modes of thought, in which the artist builds as he conceives his work already to have been planned in heaven, has kept the builders of the hunting cultures to circular and oval floor plans for untold generations, even to the present day. These people did not, and do not, refuse to use rectilinear plans because they are too stupid to conceive them, nor merely because they wish to avoid what is unaccustomed. It is not a question of good or bad *luck*, but of good or bad *form*. If the universal house that God created is round, a decent builder does not try to improve on God's creative methods when he comes to construct a little house.

The first gardeners, and the peasants who followed them, were quite as convinced that the universe was rectangular. For them the master fact of life was the







*Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, England*

unending repetition of life and death, and all the other alternations which symbolized it—day and night, summer and winter, the new moon and the old moon. They saw this reciprocation, this duality, as a great cosmic principle, of which all the events of individual lives were but manifestations. But the principle of duality might be doubled on itself, and the number behind reality seen as four, the sun riding daily through four phases, dawn, noon, sunset, and night, and yearly through an analogous four, spring, summer, autumn and winter, which phases were marked in the sky by the four great pivotal moments, the solstices and the equinoxes, and mirrored also in the ages of man. Thus for the early peasants four was the number of power and the square, its plane figure, the shape of the cosmos. When they built their habitations they made the walls rectangular with strong square corners for the same religious reason that imposed circular or oval plans upon the hunting peoples. It would simply have been an act of impiety to build in any other way. The modern archeologist is able to know the cultural type of the builders of

the foundations he unearths. When he finds curved walls built on the ruins of square he assumes that hunting people had driven out peasants. When he finds square walls above circular, he knows that the peasants have reoccupied. And when the walls were those that enclosed particularly sacred places, spots associated with numinous experiences of one sort or another, we may suppose that the walls of remembrance, whether round or square, were laid up with special care.

Such must have been the origins of the temple. It was not an idea that had come down from our first parents. Adam and Eve knew no more how to build walls than they knew how to build fires. In the first chapters of Genesis no temple appears, for the whole of Eden was blessed ground where the first man and woman walked serenely in the full consciousness of their Creator's wonderful Presence. There was neither need for temples nor was there skill to make them. Such things were still far in the future. And so also, in the last book in the Bible, St. John describing for us the second Eden, tells us that he saw no temple there. "For the Lord God Almighty



is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.”<sup>2</sup> But these two paradises are the beginning and the end of a long and bitter story, the history of sinful, fallen man, and for him, inspired or uninspired, redeemed or unredeemed, some sort of temple has proved a necessity.

Neither the hunters, through the millennia of their isolation, nor the peasants through the millennia of theirs, were able to develop the full temple idea or manifest it in stone. Under the pressure of a constant struggle for physical survival, the hunters developed a system of thought which expressed the analogies they saw between their way of life and their ideas about God. They developed totemism, animal worship, the cult of triumphant masculinity, and the conviction of the possibility of an infinitely developing power and achievement. They evolved a type of paganism that, with its truths and its falsehoods, its wisdoms and its follies, has characterized all subsequent hunting cultures. The peasants, on the other hand, obsessed by the idea of fertility, with its endless cycle of life and death, life coming from life but through death, with its emphasis on the importance of femininity, developed an entirely different type of paganism, equally true, equally false, equally wise and foolish, and within the limits of peasant experience, equally logical. Here, too, the pressure of the necessity for survival, over countless thousands of years, crystallized a type of religious and cosmological thinking which was the same wherever in the world the peasants spread. But neither of these systems of life and thought was able to develop or materialize the temple idea. To achieve that they needed each other.

As populations increased and the habitable parts of the world filled up, it was inevitable that there should be collisions between hunters and peasants. As an example let us take the collision that is believed to have happened in North Africa.

<sup>2</sup>*Apoc.* 21, 22.

The melting of the last ice in Europe was accompanied by a drought in what is now the Sahara Desert; previously this was a great prairie as full of game animals as East Africa is today. It was a “hunters’ paradise” and the hunters were there to enjoy it, and when the game moved south and east they followed. In the valley of the fertile Nile they found villages of peasants hoeing, planting, and harvesting their crops, thanking the Great Mother for her gifts to them, and obsessed by the idea of fertility and its lunar symbols in the sky. Here a mixture of cultures and of religions took place, the aggressive hunters doubtless conquering the pacific gardeners, but being at the same time profoundly influenced by the value of their skills and by their ways of thinking and worshipping.

THE TWO religions which were thus fused together were each in themselves logical enough, but the mixture that resulted was utterly illogical, and it is this illogic that makes later Egyptian religion so difficult to understand. On the one hand, is the worship of Isis and Osiris, a purely peasant conception of the Earth Mother with her eternally dying and reviving divine mate. On the other hand, the locally venerated “animal gods,” in all their variety and grotesqueness, are the old totems of the invading hunting tribes, which the orderly Egyptian mind tried to reduce to a system. But eventually totemism and sun-worship on one side and fertility and moon-worship on the other shook down into a stable, if uneasy, compromise, and by the time the first dynasties appeared the compromise had long been accepted; the whole land was unified under its priest-king, and the temple appeared as the great unifying social fact.

Physically, the temple was a space surrounded by a wall. Most of the space was not roofed. It was a great fane, or holy space, separated from the pro-fane space around it by a wall of cut stone. Its func-



tion was to provide a link between the unseen reality of the numinous — the awe inspiring presence of divinity — and the seen, heard and felt phenomena of every day life. This stone-built temple was to serve as a bond between gods and men. It was to represent the house of the heaven dwellers on earth, and as that house is the universe, the habitation that the Creative Power built for itself, so the temple must in every possible way resemble that universe. The peasant conception of the cosmos as four-square triumphed here, and the temple was *oriented*, faced to the rising sun, its four corners set in agreement with those cardinal points which form the four corners of the world. As the universe is huge, so must the temple be. As the universe is ancient — of unimaginable longevity — so must the temple be. As it is made of stone, so must the temple be. These were the necessities that forced upon the Egyptian people, not yet technically advanced beyond the stone age, the almost insuperable difficulties of monumental stone architecture. Neolithic men were confronted with the necessity of quarrying, transporting, and accurately shaping enormous blocks of sandstone, limestone, and even granite. The miracle is that they surmounted this seemingly insuperable barrier and achieved their end.

What happened in Egypt happened also in various parts of Asia where similar fusions took place between the polytheisms of the hunting tribes and the pantheism of the peasants. The Archaic cultures, though differing in detail, follow the same general pattern. From the China Sea to the Mediterranean we find cultures based on the idea of the temple and its priest-king, the temple being the artificial and enduring edifice which links together man and god, and the priest-king being the god's divinely appointed earthly representative.

But the handling of large stones was only one of a number of innovations that made the temple possible. To fulfill its functions the temple had to be much more

than just four walls standing to keep apart the sacred from the profane. The walls had to be squared with the universe in the image of which they were built. They had to be accurately adjusted to this or that particular heavenly body. That such orientations could be relied on as correct, the stars had to be studied in a systematic and entirely new way. The casual observations of shepherds watching their flocks at night and poetically mythologizing and story spinning, were quite insufficient for the new purpose. The knowledge now necessary required not only the invention of accurate instruments, but the recording of the information derived from their use over the lifetimes of many generations. Thus the conception of the temple, of necessity, brought into existence a self-perpetuating class of priestly astronomers, and gradually the science of astronomy itself.

But many other sciences and arts had to be developed before the temple could function properly, and developed they were, whether from already existing primitive skills or anew from the beginning. As we have seen, the primary duty of a wall is to separate — this from that space, and this from that mental attitude; but the temple wall has other duties which, though secondary, are none the less vital. A living wall must be able to speak as well as stand. It must know how to tell the worshipper what it is, and who he is, and why he is where he is, and what he is to do. But how can a pile of stones, however huge the stones, and however carefully cut and laid, speak? Even living animals cannot speak, so how can speech be expected of dead stone? How can the fleeting word, that dies as soon as it is born, be perpetuated and immortalized? Surely, the man who solved this problem was one of the world's greatest geniuses. He was the inventor of systematic and orderly hieroglyphic writing. From a probably existing system of memory aids and marks of ownership, he invented a way of making speech perma-

ment. He was the first of the scribes, and showed his fellow priests how to cover the insides of the temple walls with living words. The walls found their tongues and began to live.

But speech was not the only vital function that the wall was to possess. It must also be given sight. If the worshipper was to feel the full force of the numinous presence, the wall must have eyes to see as well as mouth to command. This miracle was achieved by the development of formal painting and sculpture. The children of the temple learned to carve and to paint impressive figures of divine personages; and in these personifications—as it had also been with the more grotesque figures of ancestors and tutelary animals of wilder times, the *eyes* were greatly emphasized. The worshipper was made to feel that the *eyes* of the ancient ones were upon him. Even in our own days the portraits of great statesmen, lawgivers, and former governors that adorn the walls of the governor's council room have a little of the same effect. Not only did the walls of the holy house speak to the worshipper, telling him what he was to do, but, looking from the eyes of the images depicted upon them, saw to it that they were obeyed.

Not only were monumental stone architecture, astronomy, writing, and the iconographic arts developed as necessary instruments for the proper functioning of the temple, but many others as well, such as arithmetic, geometry, music, dancing, and rhetoric. That group of scientific and artistic disciplines that later came to be known as the Seven Liberal Arts, and that other group, said to be under the patronage of the Nine Muses—indeed all those areas of activity that we think of today as the arts of pleasure, the cultural arts, the refined or fine arts—were developed as simple religious necessities. Without the temple and its priest-king, man would have fallen back into his primeval anarchies and despairs, into a nightmare world of disorder and horror and famine

out of which he had only extricated himself with infinite labor. Without these ancillary arts the temple could not function. Without them men could not, as an organized and civilized social body, render to the unseen and awful powers their due of worship. And so we can see architecture in its origins as far more than a collection of technical conveniences, a group of skills providing men with the physical necessities of shelter and insulation. These material architectural functions indeed exist, and are obviously important, but to architecture in its original conception they are secondary. As originally conceived, architecture serves man on his highest rational level. If he is to live above the plane of the perishing beasts, it is an indispensable guarantee of his full humanity.

Such, at its best, was the architecture of the ancient pagan world. Its most basic psychological element was the experience of awe that the normal human being feels for the divine Presence, the experience of the *numinous*. But this attitude of respect for powers which are manifestly above man, and superior to him, is not the only one involved in the development of the temple. St. Augustine pointed out that love and respect go out from the human heart in many directions, and that the direction in which love proceeds determines its quality. The love of God, and of whatever other powers there may be superior to man, is the love of the lower for the higher, and we call it **WORSHIP**. But there is also love for those beings who are on our same level, our human fellow-creatures, and this we call **FELLOWSHIP**. And to complete the picture there is the love that we owe to those beings that are below us in the hierarchical scale, without the existence of which in the cosmos we could not exist. To these humbler fellow-creatures also we owe love, albeit a love of a different kind. They are for our use, but surely not for our abuse, and this love of the higher for the lower is well named **STEWARDSHIP**. In this post-lapsarian world



no man can be entirely normal, but to the extent that he is normal his love must go out in all these directions. He is surrounded on all sides by beings other than himself, and to all of them he owes love, whether as worship, fellowship, or stewardship. And as an artist his art will be normal, to the extent that it is so, in proportion to the degree in which it is vitalized by his love of God, neighbor, and lower creatures.

What applies to all arts applies to architecture, and I cite St. Augustine here in order to make clear what I mean in using the words "religion" and "religious" in connection with architecture. I am not concerned here with the proportion of religious truth that may be manifested by any particular religious formulation, but with a basically religious frame of mind towards the Creator and toward his creatures just because they are that. It is not difficult to see just how fundamental to real architecture this attitude of respect and love is. For the whole conception of the truly architectural pattern is a reflection of the builders' ideas of God and of the proper worship of God. And all the functional architectural problems have to do with the use of the building by human beings, the fellowship of the neighbors. And the physical materials used, the stones, the timbers, the metals, and the rest, must be studied and developed and loved for what they in their inmost natures are, if the neighbor is to be properly assisted in his worship. True architecture cannot exist without an understanding of and reverence for the sanctity of all the beings that surround the builder.

well suited to her divine ends. True it is that there is no temple either in the first or the second Paradise, but the soldiers of the Church Militant have the same human need for the support the temple gives as did their pagan forefathers or the Children of Israel. And so the young Bride accepted from the ancient religions of which she was the fulfillment the religious paraphernalia that they developed. She accepted the temple and purified it. She borrowed from the pagans quite as much as from Israel. Of particular interest to us is her rejection of the Mosaic proscription against holy images, and her bold adoption of the iconographic arts of painting and sculpture which had been such prominent features in pagan worship. We must remember that she well might not have adopted these hitherto forbidden arts, and followed the Mosaic law as Islam and some Christian sects have followed it. But whether she borrowed from Jew or from Gentile, it is incorrect to call the Church the "Mother of the Arts." These arts, and the temple they served, antedated her, as we have seen. It is religion in its wider sense, including paganism with its misconceptions and abnormalities, that is the true mother. The Church is the "Foster-Mother of the Arts."

For roughly a millennium and a half, architecture and her assistant arts were happy, healthy, normal foster children. Whether or not all members of Christendom were faithful Christians, nevertheless the Christian faith and ethic were accepted as fundamental to society by all except outlaws and criminals, and were taken for granted and unquestioned. During the Early and Later Middle Ages, there were few artistic problems, because among the Church's fosterlings there were few problem children. As has been well said, it was artistically a blissful time when almost everything made was well made and so a work of art, and no one saw much point in talking about it.



CHRIST'S Kingdom is not of this world, and his Church is not concerned primarily either with architecture or its ancillary arts. But she is concerned with them secondarily, as means

BUT all things come to an end, and the medieval culture of Europe was no exception. Western Christendom, which had already been cut off from the East by the Great Schism, now found itself divided by the Reformation. This was a far more serious wound, not only because the theological differences between the disputants went deeper, but because the dispute assumed a political aspect and was followed by civil war and centuries of violence. When the smoke of battle finally cleared away it began to be apparent that neither the Protestant north nor the Catholic south had won. That which was defeated was Christendom itself, and the real victor was secularism, the natural enemy not only of any form of Christianity but of any form of religion whatever — the very spirit of no-religion itself. As the 16th century became the 17th, and the 17th turned into the 18th century, it became evident that the determining motives and forces of society were no longer even ostensibly religious, but were those with which we are familiar in our secular civilization today. With this mighty change came many minor ones. The hierarchical structure of society began to break down. The arts and sciences began to reject the claims of theology and metaphysics to be the master disciplines. Each science tended to find its own first principles within its own borders. The directive and co-ordinating functions of the higher disciplines over architecture and her ancillary arts weakened and disappeared.

The old medieval architect had been the arch-technician — the craftsman on the job who was most fitted to take the lead in the work, perhaps the best carver of images, perhaps the best designer of vaulting, perhaps merely the best handler of other men. He was *primus inter pares*, the first in a group who shared the brotherhood of a great craft. He made no pretense to be either a scholar or a gentleman. He belonged to a self-respecting working

class, whose world was that of picks and shovels, hammers and chisels, derricks and scaffoldings. But the new architect who appeared to take his place and to guide the architectural developments in a world steadily becoming more secular, was an entirely different kind of a man. He was a scholar who could read not only Latin but Greek, and whose soul was afire with enthusiasm for the imagined perfections of the pre-Christian classical world. He had studied Vitruvius. He had "breathed the free spirit of inquiry" as did the ancient Athenians, and like them he could appreciate the beauties of this earthly life. He had perhaps dug up pieces of ancient sculpture in Italy and had measured ancient buildings. And from all this he had developed *taste*, the taste of an educated man of a superior class. He was not only a scholar, but as one enjoying a position socially distinct from mere workmen, he was also a gentleman. "So," to quote Mr. Stanley Morison, "came in respect for art and artists, so went out respect for work and workmen."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries the new spirit of architecture gained strength, and the older spirit became increasingly discredited. Technical standards were maintained, but the mind of the designer was progressively cut off from the realities of his work. He came more and more to deal with the appearances and less and less with the essentials of his art. He put his faith not so much in his craft as in an academic loyalty to the cultural excellence of a largely fictitious and imaginary past. In so doing he lost contact with the most essential elements of his business as architect. Having freed his mind from theology and metaphysics, he no longer knew clearly *why* he was building churches, nor what churches in their innermost natures are. He accordingly saw no reason against

<sup>3</sup>Stanley Morison, *The Typographic Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) p. 19.





simulating pagan temples or against persuading his patron that such inventions were suited to contemporary Christian worship. And he was utterly unable to use symbols in a direct and living way because he did not know what principles were to be expressed analogically, nor how to analogize them. But he had also freed himself from the working class and its technical preoccupations, and so had lost contact with the material and instrumental realities of the building crafts. His designs reflected less the placing of one squared stone on another, and more the laying of ink lines on paper. The emphasis on the importance of the façade, which is so characteristic of "paper architecture," results from this dichotomy between the designer and the stone mason.

Originally, building was an affair of

patron and artist, and church building an affair of priest and mason. As patron the priest was concerned with final causes and as theologian and philosopher with formal causes. The mason was concerned with material and efficient causes. Together they coöperated, and their coöperation included all the necessary elements. But our post-Renaissance architect had carefully disassociated himself from both priest and workman, and thus from a normal contact with all the four realities of his problem as designer. Is it any wonder that his designs lost power and grip, and slid rapidly into exhibitionism and foolishness? But for a few centuries building rolled along merrily enough, like a string of freight cars long after the engine has been detached and has puffed off elsewhere. No one seemed to notice that the

cars were out of control.

But changes began to be visible toward the end of the first third of the 19th century. Quite suddenly—for the only dates that we can assign seem to center around the year 1840—the freight cars came to a grinding and jolting stop. For the first time in history certain technical traditions broke down. Apprentices no longer learned the technical methods of their masters. In portrait and landscape painting, in stone carving, in the design of buildings and in many other arts, the methods that had been so painfully perfected and so carefully handed along, were apparently thought of as shackles to be thrown off in a new dawn of artistic freedom. And thrown off they certainly were. In architecture “the Greek Style,” the most recent form of the classic, was replaced by a chaos of wild eclecticism. Designers felt free to imitate shapes from any kind of building whatever, without the slightest obligation to understand what they were copying. They built fake Alhambras, Swiss chalets, Gothic cathedrals, Chinese pagodas. There was little if any relation between the shapes to which the stones were cut, and the uses to which the walls were put. The long Victorian anarchy that resulted was fantastically and oppressively ugly.

### TIME IS



TOWARDS the end of the 19th century a handful of American architects revolted against the ugliness and absurdity of the Victorian anarchy. They realized that the butterfly chase after exotic shapes had been unreasonable and had ended in disgust. They saw the status of architecture as impossible. They proposed to strip away from their work everything “ornamental,” and to be guided solely by considerations of a building’s use and the ways in which it is put together. The words “function” and

“structure” became their slogans, but not much attention was paid to these men until their ideas returned to this country from Germany, where they had roused a lively interest. The best formulation of the new ideas was, and probably remains, that of the Bauhaus.

The revolutionaries saw that the Victorian copies of architectural ornaments were dead and ripe for burial. Meaningless decorations had been used “to fill empty spaces.” The new men saw no harm in plain wall surfaces as such. They understood that a true style is nothing but the way in which a certain mind spontaneously “sees” the solutions to his problems. An adopted style is a false style. Architecture could not be expected to recover health until these deadly excrescences were removed.



THE NEW movement was also good in stressing the importance of the use of a thing in determining its shape. “Form follows function” became a by-word.

All beautiful things, whether of nature or of art, inevitably express the functions for which they are designed. The 19th century anarchists had flouted this law, divorcing shapes from functions without any compunction.

In a like way the insistence of the new men on truth to structure was clearly good. All beautiful things, of art as well as of nature, are put together in some appropriate way. Part of their beauty is the expression of their structural perfection. Why should we be ashamed to show things as they are? If the brick lintel is supported by steel, let us not attempt to conceal the fact in the name of prettiness. They saw that any new object has a right to a shape determined by the reality of its particular arrangement of parts, and should not have the shape of some other object—with en-



tirely different reasons for being — arbitrarily inflicted on it.

In general, the designers of the Bauhaus were the conscious champions of common sense and rationality. They saw the styles of the last three centuries as steps in an architectural decline. The 17th and 18th centuries conceived architecture as the application of beautiful styles to building. The 19th century saw it as the application of "good taste," "selective aesthetic judgment" to building. The 20th century saw it as an attempt to apply reason and intelligibility to building. But unfortunately the movement was not as radical, in the sense of really getting to the roots of the architectural problem, as its proponents believed.



HE reformers, in condemning dead ornament, failed to appreciate the basic nature of living ornament. They were not sufficiently sympathetic with the thinking of men of traditional cultures to realize that most architectural ornament is a form of speech, and that it cannot be removed without robbing a building of all its eloquence, and impoverishing it aesthetically. The intellectual and emotional poverty which has characterized "modern" building, is one of its chief problems, and results from this lack of understanding on the part of its proponents. In an endeavor to add an "architectural" interest to walls so bare that it had become difficult to distinguish the "new" architect from the old engineer, the designer fell into an amazing series of irrationalities in the use of structural details. In order to secure at least the interest of novelty, he contradicted traditional usages which were established on a firm basis of common sense and human experiences. It may be surprising to see clapboards vertical instead of horizontal, but it is not better building, or the supports of stair rails horizontal rather than vertical.

Because pitched roofs shed rainwater better than flat ones, we do, for a while, enjoy the thrill of surprise when we see them flat, as well as the thrill of awareness that now things *can* be done which were formerly impossible. The same applies to substituting corner windows for the point of strength in a wall. We can do these things but they are not better, and the joy of surprise wears off and a feeling of architectural disappointment may take its place. These ingenious efforts at the relief of boredom through novelty must be understood for what they are: the end results of a basic misapprehension of the true nature of ornament.

So it was with the "functionalism" of the innovator. Man has a body, and a building should minister to its needs, but physical and material function will not long satisfy him. He does not live by bread alone. And true ornament in really perfect architecture is just that. It is the functionalism of the spirit, the service of the human soul, which has rights and needs as surely as has the human body. Those who regard ornament and decoration as a matter of pleasing the eye rather than the intellect by means of the eye, will, of course, almost inevitably fall into this error.

IT WAS much the same with the enthusiasm for structure. The reformers allowed themselves to identify structure with industrial techniques, and to be persuaded that what *is* is good. It is an accident of history, but it is true, that the revolt against the irrationality of 19th century architecture coincided with an enthusiasm for industrial technique. In suggesting that the whole hearted acceptance of industrialism is of doubtful wisdom, let me not be understood to hold that machines as such are evil. It is not the size, complexity, or power of mechanical instruments that is deplorable. In themselves machines are innocent enough. But their use gives those who control them a terrible

power over the fate of their fellow men. Man's willingness to be inhuman to man has always been a sufficiently marked feature of this post lapsarian world, but industrialism has implemented it as never before, and countless millions mourn. The presence of these new powers in an already secularized society has had disastrous consequences. One of these is the attitude of exploitation, violence rather than love, with which the industrial world deals with its "raw materials" — what in a sacral society would be regarded as divine gifts. Craftsmanship and industrialism are mutually exclusive. In craftsmanship, productive man fulfills himself. In industrialism, productive man abolishes himself.<sup>4</sup>

And finally, due perhaps more to a lack of philosophical discipline and balance in its proponents than to anything else, a movement of architectural reform which set out to re-establish rationality in a moribund profession and to do away with "the styles," fell into a set of irrationalities of its own and itself became "a style." As Mr. Stanley Morison has said: "The Bauhaus was . . . more intellectualist than rational."<sup>5</sup> It discredited the false ornament of the Victorians, but ignorant of the nature of true ornament, it was unable to distinguish itself from engineering and free itself from its bread-alone poverty. In attempting to find a way out of this dilemma, it accepted novelty and surprise and other eccentricities for lack of a more valid source of interest.



"crack pot" has been defined as a man who is aware of important problems of which most of his fellow citizens are ignorant, but who does not know how to solve these problems correctly. The crack-pot is thus worthy of praise for his unusual sensitivity to evils needing correction, but he is to be pitied because his proposed cures of these evils are ineffective. If

this is a correct definition, we might call the "modern style" in architecture a crack-pot style. Its founders recognized evils of which the majority of architects of the late 19th century were unaware; but they have not known what to do about them. They adopted measures that were concerned with man not as he is, as a whole, but with only the material part of him. They neglected the guidance of philosophy, which should have been able to steer them past the rocks on which they were wrecked. This is not surprising when we consider that the whole secularist movement in architecture began with the rejection of theology and philosophy as directing disciplines. Instead of being guided by the light of disciplined reason, it allowed itself to be shepherded by commercial and other irrational forces into a position which is aesthetically and intellectually indefensible.

All the greatest examples of true architecture are products of sacral societies where it is taken for granted that the normal motives of human work are love of God, love of neighbor, and love of sub-human creation. In our secularized society each of these attitudes of *giving* has turned into a corresponding *getting*. Worship has given way to irreligion. The highest intelligence with which we are concerned is not that of God, but with that of man. "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul." Fellowship with regard to our neighbors turns into competition with him. Therefore, any kind of building, such as our western Romanesque or Gothic which depends upon the coöperative spirit, is utterly beyond our reach. And the substitution of the spirit of exploitation of the creatures that supply our architectural materials, prevents our handling them for our needs with full realization of their potentialities. The materials we use are dead when they should be alive. The builders of

<sup>4</sup>C. S. Lewis has developed this matter with his usual lucidity in *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

<sup>5</sup>Morison, *op. cit.*, p. 19.



sacral societies show a child's or a poet's delight in the beings outside themselves, above, beside, and below; but our secularized builders do not show this, but an altogether unfruitful love of the self within. Worship of God, fellowship with neighbor, and stewardship for the rest of creation have become poisoned and perverted. There has been a failure of "*religio*," of the spirit of awe and love.

## TIME SHALL BE

IF I AM correct in my analysis of the present phase of architecture, then we have taken at least one step towards its restoration. We now have a method of building which is stripped of all ornament, either living or dead, which emphasizes common sense and the values of use and structure in design, but which accepts industrialism as a normal, if not an ideal, cultural stage. We know where we are now, but how are we to proceed from hence? There has been no lack of piety and good intentions, but it is pretty clear that these are not enough. We need also some kind of analysis with which the architectural intelligence can work. I suggest this. The whole may be greater than the sum of its parts, but it is at least the sum of them, and if each part is not doing its job on all levels, the whole cannot function as it should. I will assume that the essential parts of the typical building are seven in number, and suggest that we consider each of these from points of view at various levels.

First of all, there is the holy THING which is at the center of the building, which the building exists to protect or to commemorate. In the primitive fane it may be the stump of the fire-tree, the spring of bubbling water, the rock of miracle or of sacrifice. In the family dwelling it is the hearth stone; for almost all purposes a central fire is more efficient than one against a wall. But the building exists to protect this center from desecration of time and of space.

Next there is the wall which surrounds this holy spot, the periphery of which it is the center. The primary function of this wall is to divide space from space. In a modern house the walls divide and distinguish the outdoors from the indoors, the living room from the kitchen, the bedroom from the bath. If a wall does not perform its primary function of division



and distinction, if for example it is practically all one big window, then it no longer has its full intellectual and emotional *effect as a wall*, and the architectural effect of the building as a whole suffers.

Then there is the floor. It is the plane surface that supports the feet of those who use the building. To do its work well it must be flat, horizontal, and neither too rough nor too slippery. The "circulations," which are really the paths through which the feet of the inhabitants mostly move, are arranged on this plane, and consist in passages between different rooms and between different objects of interest in each room. If these circulations are arranged to suit the needs of the inhabitants they tell us quite a lot about the kind of people these are. Is the emphasis in this network of paths centered on the TV set, on the kitchen stove, the refrigerator, or the book shelves? The floor has much to tell us.

The roof is the element which protects the indwellers from danger and inconveniences from above, notably from wind, rain and snow, cold and heat. As the outer walls are the protective shell with regard

to threats from the side, so the roof is the part of the shell that protects upwards.

The door is a part of the wall which, depending on whether it is shut or open, locked or unlocked, may be regarded as part of the wall or not as part of the wall. As part of the wall it protects and divides and distinguishes. As a break in the wall it exposes, and connects, and unites. A house without a door is uninhabitable. Even prisons and tombs have doors, because even they need to be entered and departed from.

The window is another kind of break in the wall, not this time for the passage of bodies, but for the passage of light and air. Without illumination and ventilation of some kind a house will be uninhabitable for normal people. To live in a house we must breathe, and we must be able to see physical objects. The word window was originally *wind eye* or air hole.

Last of all there is the chimney. If, as in the typical or primitive house, the hearth is at the center, then there will usually be some kind of hole in the center of the roof above it to let out the smoke. The great central chimney was a feature of the finest 17th century houses in this country, but the central smoke vent was a tradition that stretched back into remotest times of which we have any knowledge.

IT IS a mark of our humanity to take comfort and see value in analogies, and there is reason to believe that for many thousands of years our ancestors have seen and felt the symbolical power of these seven architectural elements. Each of these elements — center, walls, floor, roof, door, window, and chimney — has not only its clearly understood practical functions, but it has attached to it a complex of special symbolic ideas, and these we will call here the architectural archetypes. The poets, and even the writers of quite ordinary novels use these archetypes continually and with good effect. But in so doing they have really borrowed tools out of the architect's

kit. The poet is an artist who speaks by building an edifice of words. The architect is an artist who speaks by building an edifice of stones. Both types of edifice have a rhetorical function, but today the architect is less aware of this than is the poet. Let me briefly notice the seven architectural archetypes.

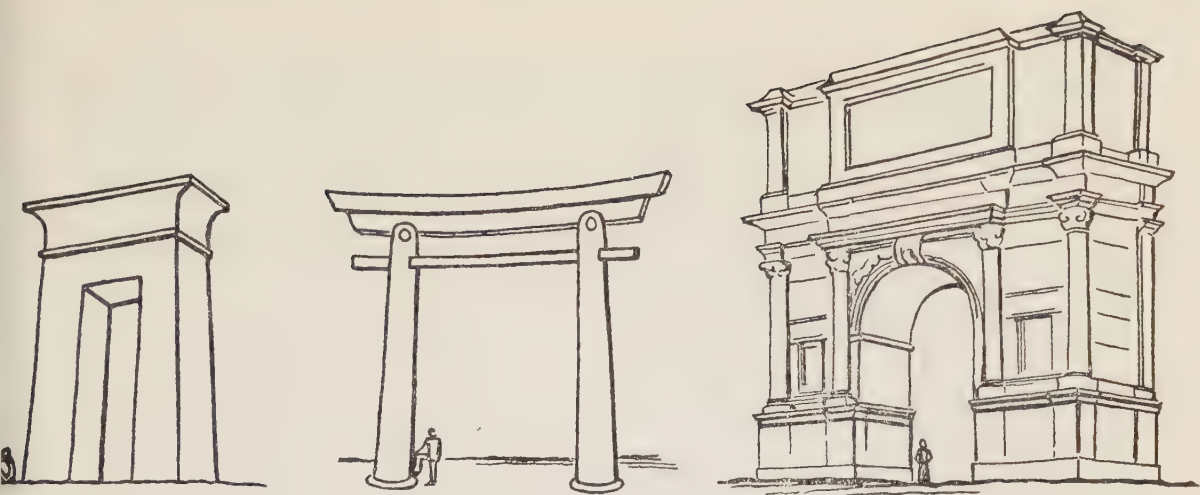
As the literal center of the building is



the holy thing around which it is built, the analogical center is the meaning of that thing, its holiness, real or imagined. It is the gratitude that men have for the gift they have received. The stump of the fire tree is of no value in itself, but it is of great value if it is a sign of divine solicitude and of human thankfulness for that solicitude. In the dwelling house of ancient people, when the literal center is the hearth stone and the little domestic sun that burns upon it, the meaning of the central fire is the meaning of its gifts to the family and their care in tending and ministering to it, and all the good things — comfort, warmth, light, safety, family unity — that revolve about it in their various orbits. Even in our modern use of language, the words "hearth," and "hearth-stone," clearly carry these symbolic or analogical meanings.

So it is also with the walls. Physically, they divide and distinguish this from that space. Symbolically, they divide and distinguish this from that mental climate for which the physical spaces stand. We are different kinds of people in different parts





*Egyptian, Japanese, and Roman arches*

of the house, one phase of character being apparent in the rumpus room, another in the library, yet another in the workshop, in the cellar. The walls not only divide the spaces, but in a sense they guarantee and guard the integrity of the intellectual climates for which the various spaces stand. They divide complexes of thought from one another. They protect spiritual worlds.

The material floor supports the feet of people; their paths are marked out on it and tell us something of their natures. The archetypal floor repeats these functions on the intellectual level. Men and women are not angels, nor are they mere animals, but they partake of both natures. The plane on which all human beings live is the analogue of the domestic floor. On this level of being we human creatures make our way. We strike out our paths between the things that interest us and thus reveal our natures. Just as the road system of the U. S. of 1955, compared with that of 1755, tells us a lot about the differences between our ideas and those of our colonial ancestors, so an understanding of the plane which we inhabit helps to an understanding of the inhabitants. Our journey through life is determined largely by the kind of creatures that we are.

As the physical roof protects us from material dangers, so the archetypal roof protects us from spiritual dangers. Among

the Egyptians and other ancient peoples, the Divine Providence and the Divine Solicitude was symbolized as the sun in the form of a great bird stretching out his wings in comfort and protection over his children. The symbolism of this protective sun bird and the symbolism of protective roofs was much the same. One was an analogy drawn from nature and the other from artifice, but the meaning behind them was the same.

As the door may be either shut or open, either a part of the wall or a way through it, it stands symbolically for decision and the use of the free will. It is commonly so used in all our literature. "Shall I knock? Shall I go in or stay out? If I enter, what shall I find, and shall I be able to get out again?" When the door pierces a wall that separates this life from the next, it is manifestly the Gate of Death. It comes then to stand for that purification which should proceed or accompany death, and was ritually so used by the pagan Egyptians, Japanese, and Romans. The triumphal arch was originally used in a rite of submission to the possibility of death, the soldiers marching through it, not in triumph, but in a gesture of willing acceptance of the fate that must some day come to us all.

The practical function of the window is the admission of light so that we may have

the use of our eyes. The analogical value is the admission of truth into our intelligences. Plato, in his "Myth of the Cave," and St. Bonaventure, in his book on light, have developed at great length the implications of the simple analogy — light : truth :: eye : intelligence :: physical objects : spiritual objects. The archetypal window, therefore, is the human intellect, our organ for receiving truth, and the sunlight that passes through it is the grace of the Supernal Sun.

In most cultures God's habitation has been thought of as above us. The prayers which we send up to him will, therefore, be typified by things that naturally rise toward the sky. Birds have been used as bearers of messages to the sky dwellers, but birds are more apt to fly sideways than straight up. In ancient China, kites were invented, up the strings of which written prayers could be sent; but this invention depends on the previous invention of string and paper. Much more primitive and much more dependable is the smoke that rises from fire, and almost everywhere smoke has been used as a symbol for prayer: graces descending with sunlight, prayer ascending with wood smoke. Santa Claus, whose legend is a vestige of that of an old solar divinity, still is said to bring his gifts *down the chimney*. We find the analogy expressed all over the world. The Greeks built temples open to the sky, or hypaethral, partly that the smoke from the sacrificial fire could escape to the sky to which it was conceived as being sent. This opening at the top of the temple dome was preserved as the *oculus* or eye of the building, and was usually protected with a little roofed building of its own, known as the lantern. Our church architects still build domes with eyes and lanterns, though it is doubtful if they are always aware of the original function of these features.

Such are the seven archetypes which correspond to the seven architectural elements. I believe that the intellectual and emotional poverty of our contemporary

building may be attributed to the neglect of these archetypes. The elements, too often, are used in such a way as to prevent them from speaking to us as it is their nature to do. The psychologist C. G. Jung has written thus of the power of the archetypes in the handling of words. "Who speaks in primordial images speaks to us as with a thousand trumpets, he grips and overpowers, and at the same time he elevates that which he treats out of the individual and transitory into the sphere of the eternal."<sup>6</sup> May I paraphrase these words to make their meaning more applicable to architecture? "Whoever builds in a fashion that allows the primordial architectural images to speak to us, releases in us tremendous powers and perceptions, and lifts the building from the level of individual and transitory things to the sphere of the eternal." If we are successful in thus teaching the walls, the floors, the roofs, the windows and doors of our buildings to speak to us of the meanings they have acquired as part of our intellectual heritage down through the millennia, we shall have rediscovered architecture. But we shall not yet have rediscovered Christian architecture. For as Christ came to restore all things to their original fullness, we cannot have a Christian architecture which stops short of the Christian fulfillments of the archetypes.

**I**N CHRISTIANITY, the holy thing at the center to protect and to explain which the edifice is built, and the holiness itself which is the meaning of that thing, are raised to an altogether new level. The truths that the Israelites dimly perceived, and that the pagans perceived more dimly still, are here. At the center of the edifice is the altar on which the fact of redemption is reenacted. It is still a fire altar, a hearth stone, for at its consecration five fires must burn upon it, and fire must burn upon it when the sacrifice is going forward. From

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by the late Charles Williams in the preface to his novel, *The Greater Trumps*.



the point of view of Christianity the central fact of the universe is the self-sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, and the center of the microcosmic church which typifies the universe, is the altar upon which that sacrifice is repeated.

So also with the walls, the walls which



physically divide spaces, which metaphysically divide states of mind — mental climates — from each other; these too are raised to an altogether higher level. Christ the Judge is spoken of as dividing the sheep from the goats. Christ, the Living Temple, whose walls are not dead stones but living souls, separates those that are outside from those inside. He himself is one of the stones, but, after being rejected by the builders, he was finally made the crown of the whole edifice. He is not only the edifice as a whole, the Mystical Body, but its head, intelligence, and glory.

The floor is the level on which men stand, and in which their paths are marked out, and which expresses their nature in the hierarchy of beings. It is the level of our toiling humanity, not yet either Purgatory or Paradise, but the status in which we fallen creatures actually find ourselves. In assuming that status Christ came down to our level and trod our paths. Of all the ways that have been beaten out on it he tells us that only one is important, *unum porro necessarium*. There is only one way that matters, and that is himself. *I am the*

*way, walk ye in me.*

In the symbolism of the roof also Christ explains himself. The pagans had spoken of the protection of the divine wings as representing the Creator's solicitude for his children. The roof carries the same symbolism, and we see clearly the connection between the two in what he said about himself as the Mother Hen. "How often have I desired to gather you under my wings as the mother hen gathers her chicks, but ye would not." Both hen and roof typify the same solicitous protection and care.

Once again there is the analogy of the door. "I have set a door in the wall of Jerusalem, and no one can close it." And again "I am the door. Unless you enter in through me, you shall not enter." In a profane world of doubt and confusion the walled building stands for the abode of the saved. The door into that eternal abode is none other than Christ himself.

He is also the window, or at any rate the light that enters this murky world through it. "I am the Light of the World" could not be clearer. And in the antiphons just before Christmas he is hailed as "*O Oriens*" "Oh Rising Sun of Righteousness," conqueror of the darkness and death of eternal night.

We have no scriptural text for the chimney, but of its architectural significance, as shown by the use of incense and of hypæthral domes, there can be no doubt. He offers himself for us to his Father. He ascends for us into heaven. He is the smoke, and he is the passage through the dome of the sky by which our prayers reach the Father's ear.

Art has been sorely wounded in our Western culture by secularism which for the primary artistic motive, which is the good of the work to be done, has substituted various secondary motives, commercial or aesthetic. We will not learn to become real artists until we can spontaneously see production not as a means to any kind of self-aggrandizement, but as an

expression of love, in service to God, to neighbor, and even to the subhuman creation. When we know how to be normal artists in general, we can go on to consider the special art of architecture.

To be architects we must learn to think of buildings, not merely as objects which hold themselves together and which fulfill their physical functions, but also as objects which have something to say about themselves and about man's place in the cosmos. They have potentially the power of speech, and they speak chiefly by means of the archetypes, or groups of metaphysical ideas which for millennia have been associated with their elements. When this potential speech becomes actual we have buildings that are objects of architecture, serving the whole man, and not mere technical achievements serving part of him only. Architecture is to mere building as poetry is to mere discourse, the primordial images giving to each "the voice of a

thousand trumpets."

And finally, to be Christian architects we must learn to recognize and to use the Christian fulfillments of the primordial images developed by our pagan forbears. The walls that we edify will not only speak, but will speak of the Redemption. As we enter the doors we will be made to feel and to know that we are entering a Paradisal situation whose only means of access is Christ, whether we image that Paradise as a Kingdom, a City, a Garden, a Bridal Chamber, a Banquet Hall or a Sheepfold. As we look up at the light streaming down from the windows we will feel and know that all good things and every perfect gift came down to us from the Father of Lights. When the stones of the building have been so shaped and so arranged that they convince us of these truths, then indeed our art will have been lifted out of the individual and the transitory and into the spheres of the Eternal.





*Special Christmas supplement to The Catholic Art Quarterly.  
Additional copies at seventy-five cents each, may be obtained  
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